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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the discrepancies between expectations and the reality of the counselor's role in secondary schools and the problems of counselors who find themselves spending too much time in clerical work and not enough time in counseling students. The design and implementation of an effective secondary counseling program at Chapel Hill High School in North Carolina is outlined. Three major services which have been implemented as branches of the Counseling Department are discussed: (1) the College Information Center, a hospitality service for college admissions representatives staffed by parent volunteers: (2) the Youth Employment and Career Education Service to assist students in finding part-time work: and (3) the Teacher Advisory Committee to increase counselor effectiveness in consultation with teachers. The need for counselors to work closely with each service and the importance of service coordination by the counseling staff are also stressed. (NRB)

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by

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and
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SECONDARY SCHOOL COUNSELORS AS COUNSELORS: EMERGING FROM THE PAPER SHUFFLE

by Gerry House and Sandra Brown

Graduate students in counseling often assume that the work they do in helping students in high schools will furnish complete job satisfaction. A student who completes a graduate program in counseling is eager to apply his/her skills in individual and group counseling, parent and teacher consultation and in organizing a myriad of activities to meet the needs of the student body. The movement of counselors out of secondary school positions and the loss of counselors to other professions cause us to raise questions about expectations and the reality of the counselor's role in secondary schools. The discrepency between career interest, graduate school idealism and on-the-job reality is particularly evident as one talks to secondary school counselors and visits programs across North Carolina and the nation.

The single most prominent barrier to secondary school counselors being counselors is the seemingly never-ending paperwork involved in pre-registration, registration, course changes, preparing transcripts, arranging for visits for college representatives, writing recommendations and general recordkeeping. The reactions to job "reality" are varied. Many counselors object to the clerical

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tasks and pursue avenues of change, many try to combine counseling and clerical tasks by extending their workday into evenings and week-ends and still others resign themselves to a fate of a secretarial role. Ultimately, counselors who desire to be "counselors" leave the profession.

Is it possible to obtain job satisfaction in secondary school counseling? Is it possible to design and implement the "utopia" outlined in graduate school? Is it possible to have an effective counseling program in a secondary school? The answers to these questions can and should be YES. It is possible for counselors to be "counselors" in a secondary school, and furthermore, it is crucial for them professionally to take the necessary steps to do so. The purpose of this paper is to outline the steps taken at Chapel Hill High School to build an effective secondary counseling program. The successes--the failures--and the thoughts for future direction will be discussed.

As in designing any counseling program, the students, faculty and parents were surveyed to determine the needs of each group. Survey results were analyzed and a program was then devised to meet many of the needs identified in the survey and to fulfill what the staff felt to be additional necessary aspects of an effective counseling program. This, as is often the case, turned out to be the easy part. The problem surfaced in implementation, as the clerical tasks continue to mount and somehow take priority over the stated goals and objectives. As the staff realized, it is imperative that administrators, student, parent and teacher groups be involved not only in the need survey but in planning and implementation as well. Understanding and being a part of the total process increase commitment and support.

It is important to note that counseling programs from school to school will be significantly different depending upon the training and experiences of the counseling staff, counselor pupil ratio and most importantly, the type of population being served. At Chapel Hill High School 80% of the graduating seniors go on to some type of post-secondary school, 60% to four year colleges. The heavy demand on the staff comes from the college bound students with recommendations, post-secondary school advising and the College Board Testing Program. Based upon previous successful experiences, the principal suggested that a College Information Center, staffed by parent volunteers be established. The CIC would be organized as an extension of the Counseling Department and would serve as a hospitality service for the college admissions representatives who visit the school each year. Additionally, the volunteers could handle statistical information, correspondence, collection, cataloging and dissemination of literature; assist with the annual college day and distribute general college information to students. The College Information Center is now in its second year of operation. It has not only relieved the counseling staff of many time-consuming duties but has also added a host of services that were not provided before. One expanded area of service is the systematizing and publicizing of visits from college admission officers. Parent volunteers handle all scheduling of such visits and post them on a master calendar. Weekly announcements of the visits are sent to every homeroom and put in Counselor's Corner, a bimonthly column in the local newspaper. College representatives are given a personalized welcome in the center and students are provided a conference area to talk with the representatives. Volunteers take notes on the type of information which is not found in the current college literature, and students take notes on the college fact sheets provided for them.

At least one counselor is in attendance at these sessions. The college representative is given an evaluation sheet to complete as he or she leaves for the purpose of improving the center. A complete listing of materials, volunteer jobs and services of the center is available.

Establishment of a CIC is not completely without problems. It is often difficult to get parents who are willing to put in so much time and effort without compensation. Volunteers must be carefully interviewed and screened. It must be stressed that volunteers provide information; they do not do counseling. Throughout the extensive inservice program for volunteers, boundaries were established and confidentiality emphasized. The center has enabled counselors to reduce their paperwork load and to provide them with more time for counseling students, conferring with teachers, etc.

The next step taken in reducing paperwork and providing more time for counselors to spend counseling students was to set up a Youth Employment and Career Education Service. Unlike the College Information Center, the Youth Employment/Career Center is supervised by a paid coordinator, through vocational funding allocated to the school. Parent volunteers are highly utilized, however, and come in on a daily basis, to assist the coordinator in such functions as calling employees about job vacancies, keeping the employment listings on the bulletin board current and arranging interviews for students. The school is fortunate to have a well equipped vocational complex and, as a result, a great deal of emphasis is placed on job-entry skills.

The purpose of the Youth Employment Service is to assist students in finding part-time work. Assistance in finding employment is provided through a) interacting with area employers to locate job vacancies; b) maintaining bulletin board listings of job vacancies, maintaining a file of students interested in certain kinds of

jobs; c) distributing job vacancy information to homeroom; d) distributing publicity cards; e) placing posters in public places advertising the service; f) calling employers who have previously hired high school students to see if vacancies exist; g) coordination of activities with community agencies (SIFT, CETA, CHAMBER of COMMERCE, Employment Security, Rotary, local sororities and faternities. Job vacancies are listed in the main lobby of the vocational building.

In addition to assisting students to locate jobs, the Career Center is available for student use. Occupational information and career guidance are provided students. Students may use filmstrips, tapes, simulation activities and books for career exploration. Interest inventories and aptitude batteries are administered upon request. The center also serves as a resource for teachers who want to incorporate career information into specific subject areas.

Information and training to improve on-the-job and job-seeking skills are provided through supportive counseling for employed students, counseling regarding interview techniques, brochures on interviewing and other aspects of job-seeking, filmstrips and tapes on job finding, the Job Survival Skills class, <u>You're Hired</u> booklet on job seeking, and other written and audio-visual materials found in the Career Center.

Students are introduced to the Career Center and the College Information Center through orientation sessions presented jointly by the Counseling Department and the two services.

In the spring of last year, the staff agreed that the volunteers in the two areas had not reduced the work load of the counselors but had significantly altered it so that much more time could be spent with individual students and with group work. Scheduling and course changes however were still occupying a disproportinate

amount of time. Additionally, counselors felt that they were not spending enough time in consultation with teachers. After considerable discussion and planning, it was decided that the possibility of establishing a teacher advisory committee would be investigated. Visitations were made to other schools that already had set up programs in this area. In trying to benefit from the successes and failures of other programs and to establish what the staff felt would be the best program for Chapel Hill High School, a proposal was presented to the faculty. The program was explained and teachers were asked to volunteer for participation. For the first year, the focus would be only on sophmores. The staff felt that the key to the success of the program would be voluntary participation and a manageable group. After reviewing carefully the components of the program, the necessary number of teachers to accommodate the sophomore class indicated an interest. A series of inservice activities on such topics as discipline, communication skills and group leadership were conducted for the advisors by the counseling staff. An activity period was arranged for every other week for the sophomore homeroom teachers to work with their advisees. At the beginning of the school year, the advisors conducted orientation session for incoming tenth graders and involved them in activities to get them acquainted with one another and with Chapel Hill High School. Continually, the advisors work very closely with their homeroom students. Counselors and grade level assistant principals work with the advisors to keep them apprised of the status of their advisees. Planning sheets were designed for teacher advisors to work with their students individually in career and educational choices. These plans were used as the basis for pre-registration of students. Advisors also help with final scheduling.

The college Information Center, the Youth Employment and Career Education Service and the Teacher Advisory Committee are the major services which have been implemented as branches of the Counseling Department. It is extremely important that one counselor work closely with each service and that total coordination come from the counseling staff. The benefits derived totally outweigh any extra time and effort spent and the problems which sometimes occur.